

Final / Approved

WALLINGFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

Thursday, February 14, 2019, 7:00 p.m.

Basement Conference Room, Town Hall

45 South Main Street, Wallingford, CT

MINUTES

PRESENT: Chair Mary Heffernon, Vice Chair John Lathrop, Dianne Saunders, Mike Miller, Tom Pietras, Carl Arsenault, Jared McQueen, and Erin O’Hare, Environmental Planner, and from the public: Jake Colvin, David Traichel, Ken Roe, Brad Sammis, Anthony Parent, Jared Liu, Lauren Takores, Record Journal

NOT PRESENT: Jeff Borne and Dianne Lendler

Chair Heffernon called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. She welcomed Jared McQueen, the new Commissioner.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Minutes, Regular Meeting, Dec. 13, 2018

Chair Heffernon called for approval of the Minutes (From December 2018 Meeting. Commissioner Saunders requested the following corrections: Section 2 A. 1. Last sentence: “licensed forester” should be changed to “certified forest practitioner”; Section 2 A. 3, This trail closed permanently to “horses”; Section 3 D. 1, Remove the part about the old hay needing to be cut as it does not need to be cut; Section 7 D, Commissioner Saunders did not attend the Conference.

Motion by Commissioner Miller to approve the Minutes as amended; seconded by Vice Chair Lathrop and approved unanimously.

Chair Heffernon asked members of the public if they had a particular subject of interest on tonight’s meeting agenda. Ken Roe stated he abuts Tyler Mill Preserve and was concerned about the closure and what he perceived to be poor progress on storm clean-up. He stated that he would like to help with tree-cutting to facilitate the opening of the park. Several members of the public in attendance identified themselves as mountain bikers and agreed with Mr. Roe’s concerns.

2. PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

A. Tyler Mill Preserve

1. May 15 Storm damage – status of hazardous tree work

Chair Heffernon asked Commissioner Saunders to summarize the role of the Commission and the Stewards of Tyler Mill in tree damage work to date and why the Preserve is still closed. Commissioner Saunders stated that tree moving machinery is needed, the Town Risk Manager must approve work and activities must comply with OSHA. A week after the storm, we submitted a detailed plan to the Town for triage. We have followed

this plan to the letter. The plan requested bids for equipment and for professionals. The bid proposal was not taken up by the Mayor's Office until the end of August. The trails are now clear.

a. Bid – report.

Commissioner Saunders stated 3 bids were submitted. It was the Mayor's call to have Public Works do the clean-up work.

a. Public Works Dept.

Commissioner Saunders reported that the Public Works Department started work on January 22 and will complete the work as time and weather allows.

When asked to explain the reference to "water supply area", Chair Heffernon responded that the property was originally bought from the New Haven Water Company for water supply and the Town got a grant for it and so we have to comply with certain restrictions of the grant. It is designated for "future water supply".

Mr. Roe asked what remains to be done and expressed frustration over the lack of public information available from the Town on the progress of the clearing work. Mr. Roe requested greater transparency. He was told he could call the Parks and Recreation Department and the Mayor's Office for updates at any time. *The Commissions will ask John Gawlak, Director, Parks and Recreation Department, to post updates of progress on the Parks and Recreation website.*

2. Stewards of Tyler Mill – report, D. Saunders & D. Lendler – (summarized above.)

Commissioner Saunders requested Ms. O'Hare make certain revisions when ordering the Tyler Mill Preserve Rules and Regulations replacement signage and to add to the other two signs, as well: Add: "Stay on blazed trails" in orange or red to stand out on a 4-inch wide strip attached to signage. *Ms. O'Hare will follow-up.*

B. Fresh Meadows

1. Trail head signage fortification and replacement of one broken sign

Commissioner Arsenault will install the replacement sign as soon as possible.

2. Main signage - relocation

Ms. O'Hare reported that Public Works will move the Rules & Regulation sign from near Cheshire Road to its original location by the parking lot when the ground thaws.

3. Map

Ms. O'Hare reviewed a draft Fresh Meadows trails map with the Commission.

C. Beseck Mountain

1. Footbridge issue (5/24/18) – nothing to discuss

2. Barrier on edge of Wisk-Key Wind Road (4/13/18) – nothing to discuss

D. Lufbery Park – possible repurposing

Chair Heffernon reported plans for improvements at the Park including elimination of the ball field, relocation of the pavilion, and a re-design of parking area layout as per a recent email from John Gawlak, Director, Parks and Recreation.

Chair Heffernon forwarded Mr. Gawlak trails information for Marcus Cooke Park and Fresh Meadows to include in the next Parks and Recreation Department booklet.

E. Other Properties

Chair Heffernon reported that Cory Folsom O'Keefe, Audubon Connecticut, is working on a packet for the Conservation Commission that will include maps of Wallingford that show the areas most likely to support migrating songbird species, areas where restoring habitat is most likely to benefit to the communities, and a map that shows the overlap between these layers. She would like to come to the March meeting.

Ms. O'Hare reported that the former Choate boathouse, -320 Washington Street, is going to be demolished. The Town obtained a Wetland Permit.

3. FARMLAND LEASE PROPERTIES PROGRAM

A. Field 18A, 995C East Center St./Tamarac Swamp Rd.

1. Proposed Request For Bid Waiver

Ms. O'Hare will follow-up on this proposed bid waiver.

2. Lease area boundary fence repair (deemed non-issue)

Ms. O'Hare indicated the lessee said this is no longer an issue.

3. Eversource Energy - Resiliency Clearing Program work - status

It was unknown if unclear if the work has been done. *Ms. O'Hare will follow-up on this.*

B. Proposed bid for Field 8B, Northford Rd

Ms. O'Hare will put the bid out.

C. Farmland Committee

1. Proposed bid for Field 8B, Northford Rd.

Commissioner Saunders indicated that the Committee did not need to meet about this.

2. Field 4C, Whirlwind Hill Rd., lease proposal

Commissioner Saunders will follow-up on soil testing after the thaw.

4. NEW ENGLAND TRAIL - National Scenic Trail - Stewardship Council representation

Chair Heffernon said she was contacted by Claire Cain, CFPA, looking to reconstitute the Stewardship

Advisory Group. *Commissioners Arsenault and Miller will be representatives and will be contacted by Ms. Cain.*

5. BUDGET FY18-19 – Professional Services-Natural Resources

Ms. O’Hare indicated the planned use of the \$6,000 budget for Tyler Mill got derailed by the May 15th storm event and proposals were needed for use of the remaining funds - \$5,710. It was agreed that the best time for mowing wildlife conservation fields is March when the ground is frozen.

Vice Chair Lathrop made a Motion to retain contractors to mow Fields 7E & 7F, off Northford Road, and most of the fields at Fresh Meadows and to have Ms. O’Hare obtain three quotes as soon as possible. Commissioner Miller seconded and the vote was unanimous.

Ms. O’Hare will follow-up.

Other suggested uses of funds for work needed was buying blue bird boxes to replace rotted ones - and chemically treating the Trees of Heaven growing at the knoll area at Fresh Meadows. Both will be discussed at next meeting.

6. BUDGET FY19-20 – proposal

It was agreed the budget proposal would remain the same as previous years. Commissioner Saunders and Ms. O’Hare will prepare a proposal for use of Professional Services-Natural Resources line item regarding a Management Plan for Tyler Mill Preserve that to address emergencies and to manage natural resources, e.g., water quality, invasive species, etc.

Commissioner Saunders will prepare a rough draft and submit to Ms. O’Hare

7. PUBLIC OUTREACH

A. Quinnipiac University – Big Event activity

The Commission agreed the student activity will be to re-blaze trail blazes at Ferguson Woods April 6.

B. Possible Program, “Backyard Habitat For Birds” (to discuss at next meeting)

C. Climate Change Roundtable (to discuss at next meeting)

8. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

It was agreed the existing slate of Officers would be nominated and a vote was taken for Chair: Mary Heffernon and for Vice Chair: John Lathrop. The vote was unanimous.

9. ANNUAL REPORT – M. Heffernon

Chair Heffernon passed out copies of the Annual Report to be submitted to the Town Council.

At this time, the Commission bid Commissioner Tom Pietras, who resigned effective March 1, farewell.

10. EXECUTIVE SESSION

A. Executive Session pursuant to CT General Statutes Sections 1-225(f) and 200(6)(D) regarding real estate

Chair Heffernon called for a motion to go into Executive Session

Vice Chair Lathrop made a motion to enter Executive Session. Commissioner Miller seconded. The vote was unanimous.

The Commission entered Executive Session at 9:17 p.m.

Chair Heffernon asked for a motion to come out of Executive Session.

Commissioner McQueen made a motion to come out of Executive Session. Commissioner Miller seconded. The vote was unanimous.

The Commission came out of Executive Session at 9:32 p.m.

11. OTHER TOPICS

Commissioner Saunders noted her recent expenses including: incidental copying expenses and five vests for the Stewards.

Vice Chair Lathrop moved to approve approximately \$100 for 5 Stewards vests. Commissioner Arsenault seconded. The vote was unanimous.

Commissioner Saunders will submit receipts as soon as possible.

12. REPORTS/CORRESPONDENCE

A. Connecticut Land Conservation Conference, Sat., Mar. 23, 2019

B. Wallingford Mountain Bike Association – “Tyler Mill Trail Repair - 2004” - copy forwarded to Environmental Planner 12/19/18

Ms. O’Hare passed around the document which was submitted to her office by David Traichel. Some Commissioners were aware of the trail work which was encouraged by the previous Director of Parks and Recreation.

C. Quinnipiac River Watershed Association – annual membership & Quinnipiac River corridor violation matter

Ms. O’Hare stated annual dues are due.

Ms. O’Hare described a recent violation – an unpermitted removal of forest along the bank of the Quinnipiac by the resident of the property at 52 Hanover Street, initially reported to her office by the President of the QRWA. Ms. O’Hare and Chair Heffernon investigated the site which borders Pragemann Park. The President of the Quinnipiac River Watershed Association (QRWA) agreed the QRWA could provide some help with restoration plantings. Ms. O’Hare recently learned that the Town has donated \$5,000 a year for at least the

last 15 years to the QRWA. She suggested the Commission may still wish to keep up its membership donation to show support to the QRWA.

Commissioner Arsenault made a motion to continue QWRA annual membership of \$40. Commissioner Saunders seconded. The vote was unanimous.

D. Quinnipiac River Linear Trail Advisory Committee – Minutes & Agenda, Feb. 7, 2019

The following were provided on the conference table:

E. CFPA magazine, *Connecticut Woodlands*, Winter 2019

F. Rockfall Foundation – email news

G. DEEP magazine, *CT Wildlife*, Nov/Dec 2018 issue, received 1/24/19

H. CT Farmland Trust – email news

13. NEXT MEETING – Mar. 14, 2019

14. ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chair Lathrop moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Arsenault seconded. The vote was unanimous.

Chair Heffernon adjourned the meeting at 10:04 p.m.